

Solitude Journal 4
Time After Time



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Greetings

Elke aus dem Moore

Time does not exist; it is a human construct; an idea or projection for a sensation of a string of moments that we call duration or time. This sensation is »neither neutral nor objective« as Fatin Abbas states in her essay »Black Time.« »Time is experienced, valued, and used differently depending on culture, history, and political context.« The perception of time is based on different value systems and creates – if these systems' diversity is not acknowledged – immeasurable misunderstandings, which may then even lead to conflicts.

Acknowledging different perceptions of time is central in a process of decolonization. While the industrial-capitalist monochromatic perception of time is associated and defined with aspects of economic activity and places the individual at the center, the polychromatic perception of time foregrounds creative work and the connection of people and the environment.

Being aware of these different approaches and questioning a universal reckoning and definition of time is central in a process in which power relations are critically questioned. In times of transformation and constant change, new perspectives on the relationship to time can be revealed or even new models for dealing with time can emerge.

I would like to thank Fatin Abbas and Dzekashu MacViban for the inspiring conversation that gave rise to the idea for this journal. Many thanks to MacViban for his profound work as editor of this edition of the *Solitude Journal*, and to Denise Helene Sumi and Jazmina Figueroa from the Digital Solitude program as well as the entire team at Akademie Schloss Solitude. Many thanks to all authors of this issue for their contributions.

Editorial Introduction

Jazmina Figueroa, Dzekashu MacViban, and Denise Helene Sumi

Like other paradoxes, time is self-referential. One way to approach time is to consider it within the framework of linearity/nonlinearity, in which case, Faulkner's words from *The Sound and the Fury* come to mind: »I give you a watch, not so you could remember time, but so you could forget it ... And not spend all of your breath trying to conquer it.« Within this specific framework of temporalities, there is no distinction between past and future, yet the reverse is also true: the »profitable« use of time that has underpinned capitalism among other »isms« for centuries attests to this.

Another way to approach time is to deconstruct it by looking beyond the dichotomy of temporalities, embracing non-Western positions and understanding that time is a construct of geography, as much as it is a construct of neoliberal capitalism. In this regard, *Solitude Journal 4 – Time After Time* attempts to push the boundaries of our understanding of time, by questioning time as we think we know it, as well as exploring it through complex prisms such as multiple and contested histories, anticapitalist discourse, Afrofuturism, queer positions, feminist scholarship, Indigenous futurity, and land sovereignty amid a global environmental crisis – a moment associated with running out of time.

In a time when the idea of progress has been wiped away by an ongoing state of crisis fueled by the industrialist-capitalist complex and colonial legacies, we'd like to recall presumptions of a lost present.

The journal's title, *Time After Time*, suggests a breach in continuity from any known constructs of time. It is an obvious nod to the expression performed by Cyndi Lauper in her eponymous 1980s pop-rock ballad. The phrase »time after time« is moreover in pursuit of the abundant encounters folded into the past, present, and imagined. The authors and artists in this edition home in on their allegiances to time through retellings, observations, and deconstructions.

In Anglophone literary canons, phrases such as »time will tell« describe the specific duration needed for what's to come, »telling time« or »of/at all times« is a way of marking the present moment as whole and complete, and if something is to occur in »only a matter of time« that denotes the inevitable. Idioms such as these

impose the annexation of certainty with time and its passing. However, »time after time« expresses another relationship having to do with repetition – time in the making, undetermined, and infinite. How often can a single situation occur, be retold, noticed, amplified, and reduced? Time and time again.

Drawing from the aforementioned positions and beyond, the contributions to this issue speak to each other, complement each other, and distance themselves from each other, offering multiple entry points into the notion of time: Sheila Chiamaka explores the Igbo ontology of time, in which time is place, time can be shifted, and time exists in more than one sphere. The Fantasia Malware collective creates games that evoke a sense of spiraling through chaotic and nonlinear worlds of myth-making and storytelling. Fatin Abbas reflects on how time is often used to create social bonds in Khartoum, whereas in New York time is used to produce things. Time can also be a tool to liberate or oppress. »The more oppressive an economic or political system is, the more compulsively it controls time,« she writes in her essay. Wanjeri Gakuru says that »time stands still,« following the brutal British repression during revolutionary uprisings in Kenya; while BaRiya meshes past epochs with emerging queer Hindi poetics in their metrical translations and quantum-like mediations.

Often it is language itself and narratives that form the way we relate to time. We tell ourselves stories, get lost in (sci-)fiction, predict the future, and juggle our memories. »Well, to make it simple as possible,« as stated in the opening contribution by Camila de Caux and Eric Macedo, »we usually say that we remember the past, live in the present, and make plans or guesses for the future,« only to then explain that the different arrows of time are tricky concepts. »Time is a silent language,« writes Sada Malumfashi in his contribution. A silent language emerges with multiple dialects, twists, and ambiguities.

Time as a language and the ambiguous forms it takes are touched upon in a conversation with Tanya Villanueva about exchanges and artistic collaborations between her and her child. Villanueva's time perception shifts in her role as artist and mother, she says it is, »how

love exists between each of us, making time to uplift each other against the darkness of our days.«

This journal also includes artistic takes on varying realms of absence in the Eurocentric episteme. Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez's reflects on dispossession with the institutional site; Nadine K. Cenoz's dissociates the explorer-colonial narratives forced upon Cerro Chaltén land in Argentina.

We, the editors, would like to express our utmost gratitude to all the authors and artists who have trusted us to compile their contributions into this intricate snapshot of decolonizing time. Thank you to Kimberly Bradley for the meticulous oversight and proofreading of all the authored works, biographies, and work descriptions anthologized in this edition.

We would additionally like to give an extended thank you to the thoughtfully designed intervention by HuM-Collective, consisting of Hannah Häußner and Max-

imilian Borchert. The printed book from which you might be reading this introduction will gradually change when the paper is exposed to haptic imprints and/or light washing, suggesting a subtle embrace of things used over time. Along the margins of the page is a sentence incorporated by HuM-Collective, where normally page numbers would be; to tell time instead of to count (reading) time.

For this iteration of the *Solitude Journal's* cover, studio Beton processed a drawing from the 2022 series *Studies in Aqueous Time* by artist Zahra Malkani. We would like to thank the artist for the possibility to using one of her drawings as the cover subject. Reproductions of Malkani's original drawings can be found in the journal. We would like to thank Elke aus dem Moore for her trust in us editors and the initial conversations we had with her and Fatin Abbas, which laid the foundation for the journal. Enjoy these timely readings.

Dear Maria

Valentina Sciarra



Valentina Sciarra, *The Mirror, The Door, The Couple, The Bat (Tomb sculptures)*,
installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021.

Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

The *Tomb sculptures* are an aesthetic reformulation of the Western world's concept of the tomb. None of the tombs consciously touches the earth. On the contrary they are »suspended« to give exactly the sensation of a trace of passage between life and death, like suspended bodies and lines. Each title recalls not a material body, but a concept linked to the action of »passage« or transformation.

In a semi-fictional letter to the curator Maria Vassileva, the artist Valentina Sciarra contemplates death and its absolute detachment from life within modern Western societies. The text is accompanied by photographs of her artworks – tombs, home altars, a game book, a time machine. They aim to function as proxies to restore and value a cyclical notion of death as a natural extension of life.



Valentina Sciarra, *Home altars*, installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

Home altars invites the public to reappropriate symbolic objects in our home that can remind us of the importance of dedicating a thought to »our essence« every day. These altars are without precise unique formal features in abstract forms of stone, ceramic, glass. Through these abstract forms, they try to reassume the dualistic conception, as a distinction and synthesis at the same time between good and evil, beginning and end, birth and death.

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Dear Maria

Dear Maria,

I'm sending you some pictures of the works that I will present in my upcoming exhibition dedicated to death and our ability to accept it. In this way I would like to help us to die, in a certain sense. Or rather to perceive the time of death not as an exceptional event, but as a way of being.

As you will see, the objects or sculptures presented can be used in everyday life to better understand the interconnectedness between life and death. These are tombs, home altars for the home, and a game book to find out how we will die; that is, denying mortal reality or accepting its course.

Since the dawn of time, humans have had to deal with the finitude of their »being,« or at least their material mantle, aware that death would occur at the end of their life's path. It is from this awareness, and from the anxieties that derive from it, that men adopt different attitudes, behaviors, and rites according to both the culture to which they belong and the historical period in which they live(d). Humankind's attitude in the face of death is a dynamic phenomenon, in continuous evolution. Collective sensitivity has the duty to seek its own way of experiencing death. It is important to know what preceded us on this topic, but our responsibility is to find our tools to join the existing life cycle.

Today – unthinkable for most of Western cultures only a century ago – the most common definition in Western society is that death is intended as the antithesis of life, as its opposite, and dying is the act that precedes it: its final and conclusive stage. Death has become an object of shame and prohibition in modern society, replacing sexuality as the main taboo. Funeral rites are emptied of their dramatic charge; death is an event presented by the mass media as exceptional, anonymous, and especially violent and spectacular.

The social drama present at the moment of death, and how this event is characterized with a strong emotional and ritual intensity, moves into the sphere of theatrical drama. It thus becomes increasingly individual and virtual, largely coinciding with the experience of mass cultural consumption.

I have the impression that even this fear of dying is generated by the perception of time in an absolute way, that is, imposed from above, the same for everyone. On the other hand, this forgets the existence of relative, subjective, inner time, which each of us has the opportunity to choose and listen to. Maria, I'm sure you, too, could add further elements and questions to this talk. Don't forget to do this.

Humans know many things about life and its processes. Death, however, is generally conceived as the only human experience that cannot be told directly. Particularly what comes after the blue wave (the last energy pulsing in our bodies) that unloads our nerves to stop them flowing inside us has limited the objective scientific study to the sole observation of the body as it decomposes. It is perhaps these limits that make man's experience of death difficult to recognize and load the concept of dying with mystery and irrationality.

Maria, the works that you will soon see will try to make the »dying/dead way of being« become »alive« on a daily basis. Because I firmly believe that only by bringing the concept of death back into our everyday lives will we have the opportunity to live fully. From a physical point of view, there is no difference between life and death: death is nothing but the mode of passage from one form of life to another. The only thing you need to be afraid of is this inability to be »part of a whole,« and to live your humanity naturally.

So in our home we suspend our tomb, we light a candle on our altar dedicated to our loved ones, and we think daily thoughts to question ourselves about what rhythm our time follows.

Buona vita a te,
Valentina



Valentina Sciarra, *Time machine*, installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

Time machine is a monumental chair that travels through time and shows that a continuous cycle of time is possible. The sculpture suggests a particular position to travel through time: a marble seat and the positioning of the hands on the metal structure.



Valentina Sciarra, *The Blue Wave*, publication, 2021.
Courtesy of the artist.

The Blue Wave game book was created for the *Salt free tears* exhibition at Structura Gallery, Sofia. It was written by Valentina Sciarra and accompanied by graphics created by Victoria Staykova based on the author's original drawings for the sculpture presented in the exhibition. Made as a complex object, the book embodies Sciarra's belief that games are a key element in accepting the concept of death. The book offers the possibility of an inner journey – playful – to face daily choices during the last twenty minutes of life before death. Being a game book, each reading can offer different paths to the ending. But ultimately, the basic concept remains the same: how we can accept death in our daily life.

Valentina Sciarra, former Akademie Schloss Solitude fellow, lives in Sofia and Rome. At this moment in her artistic career, she works with stone sculptures. A main theme of her research concerns time through sculptures, videos, installation, and writings.

Maria Vassileva is the curator of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, Sofia 2021

Dear Maria

Imprint

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Note: The phrase that runs through the journal rearranges the lyrics of the song *Time After Time* by Cyndi Lauper.

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